

Committee: FULL COUNCIL

Date: 28 November 2023

Title: Clearing North Street Offices

Purpose of Report

For Members to consider options for clearing furniture from the North Street offices and giving notice to finish the internet contract.

Recommendation:

1. Members resolve to agree the method of disposing of the furniture.
2. Members resolve to delegate to officers to organise the removal of the wall hangings in the Chamber and to have them hung in the Old Magistrates Court.
3. Members resolve to delegate to officers to organise the scanning of the burial books and accept the quote given, and to put plans in place for moving documents to Somerset Heritage Centre.
4. Members resolve to delegate to officers to give 90 days notice to the internet provider to finish the contract for North Street on 31 March 2024.

Background:

1. At the Town Council meeting held on 17 October 2023:

2023-0141-TC North Street

Members **RESOLVED** by 5 votes for, 4 against and 1 abstention (Cllr Osborne) to notify Somerset Council that they no longer wish to rent North Street and will end the tenancy of the property on the 3 March 2024.

Proposer Cllr Shearman **Seconded** Cllr Taylor

Report:

1. All of the furniture in the chamber and the offices upstairs will need to be removed before the Town Council vacate the building in March 2024. Examples of items that remain upstairs are shown at **Appendix 16A**.
2. There are a variety of options for the disposal of these items:
 - a. Advertising a sale via social media, and website.
 - b. Advertising an auction on a set date.
 - c. Offer the items to a charity shop.
 - d. Dispose of the items that are not saleable.
3. There may be some items that Members consider to be of value, and so Members may wish to delegate to officers to organise a valuation of those

items before they are sold on. Members may agree the method of disposing of the furniture.

4. Members may wish to delegate to officers to organise the removal of the wall hangings in the Chamber and to have them hung in the Old Magistrates Court.
5. There is a fireproof safe in the office upstairs that holds the burial books. It is believed that the safe has been in the office prior to the formation of the Town Council in April 1974. This may be the same for the smaller safe that is on the ground floor of the building.
6. The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (SI.204) state that burial registers must be kept indefinitely.
7. Officers tried to obtain quotes to move the safe from the North Street office to the Old Magistrates Court, however, one company raised concerns regarding the strength of the staircase in North Street.
8. Officers also looked at purchasing a safe or fireproof bags for the Old Magistrates Court. The bags were not large enough to hold one of the books. The quotes for a safe ranged from £3,000 to £8,000.
9. Since then, officers have made enquiries with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) to confirm that hard back burial books are not a statutory requirement as long as electronic records are kept. Ilminster Town Council record all interments on Epitaph, the cemetery management system which is part of the finance/cemetery package held with AdvantEdge.
10. There are 15 burial books which can be scanned and kept by the Town Council. A quote to scan the books is at **Appendix 16B**. This is a niche business as the books are not a standard size eg. A2. The books are collected and taken for scanning, which can be done in as little as 4 days. The company then send the files as 300dpi jpeg files and as multi-page pdfs.
11. The other documents held in the safe are receipts for plots and interments which will need to be listed before being sent to the Somerset Heritage Centre.
12. Members may choose to delegate to officers to organise the scanning of the burial books and to put plans in place for moving documents to Somerset Heritage Centre.
13. The internet provider for the North Street building requires 90 days notice to terminate the contract. Members may wish to delegate to officers to give 90 days notice to the internet provider to finish the contract on 31 March 2024.

Julie Earp
Deputy Town Clerk/RFO
24 November 2023